

ghostses

a duo

Casey Anderson

each performer reads and plays a batterie of instruments including:

- an assortment of tuning forks (random pitches) and acoustic resonators
- an am/fm radio
- a harmonica or similar reed instrument
- a kitchen timer/bell
- a variety of little percussion instruments (rocks, toys, etc.)

the corpus

an excerpt of The Rings of Saturn by W.G. Sebald. initial performances used most of Chapter 1.

the corpus is separated into multiple files (layers) via a Python program. one layer contains all text (the background layer) and is printed on white paper. numerous foreground layers contain filtered, colored portions of the text (currently organized into parts of speech) printed on transparencies.

stack(s)

a page, or stack, is created by combining (stacking) one or more foreground layers on top of a background layer (every layer in a stack must be from the same page of the processed corpus). for example, a possible page 1 stack with background, adjective, noun, and symbol layers:

It was Janine who referred me to the surgeon Anthony Batty Shaw, whom she knew from the Oxford Society, when after my discharge from hospital I began my enquiries about Thomas Browne, who had practised as a doctor in Norwich in the seventeenth century and had left a number of writings that defy all comparison. An entry in the 1911 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica had told me that Browne's skull was kept in the museum of the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital. Unequivocal though this claim appeared, my attempts to locate the skull in the very place where until recently I had been a patient met with no success, for none of the ladies and gentlemen of the present administrative staff at the hospital was aware that any such museum existed. Not only did they stare at me in utter incomprehension when I voiced my strange request, but I even had the impression that some of those I asked thought of me as an eccentric crank. Yet it is well known that in the period when public health and hygiene were being reformed and hospitals established, many of these institutions kept museums, or rather chambers of horrors, in which prematurely born, deformed or hydrocephalic foetuses, hypertrophied organs, and other items of a similar nature were preserved in jars of formaldehyde, for medical purposes, and occasionally exhibited to the public. The question was where the things had got to. The local history section of the main library, which has since been destroyed by fire, was unable to give me any information concerning the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital and the whereabouts of Browne's skull. It was not until I made

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performers are encouraged to change the number and selection of foreground layers in each stack. a sequence of stacks may be arranged in any order provided both performers follow the same sequence.

reading (silently, aloud)

progression through each stack is dictated by each performer's individual, silent reading of the background layer (read "through" the foreground layers) from top to bottom, left to right, at their normal reading rate (reading rate is not or loosely coordinated). when a performer arrives at a word on a foreground layer (i.e. a colored word on a transparency) they read that word aloud (and may additionally read aloud one or two words directly proceeding and/or following that word). the reading volume of both performers should be generally balanced/nearly even.

action(s)

performers assign an instrument from their batterie to each foreground layer (for example: nouns refer to radio, verbs to tuning forks, etc.). upon arriving at a word on a foreground layer performers simultaneously execute the corresponding action and read that word aloud. the duration of each action is dictated by the distance between pairs of words on the same foreground layer and each performer's individual, silent reading of the background layer. reading volume and the volume of ones action should be generally balanced/nearly even.

exceptions, additions

- the symbols/punctuation layer is the only layer wherein marks on the transparency are not read aloud
- radios with mechanical tuning dials, in which the station may be changed while the radio is off, are preferred. change the dial after every "off"

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a loosely coordinated distortion

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